

March 18, 2009

To: all members of the Montana Senate Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs Committee

From: Tim France, President

Worden's Market, Inc.

451 N. Higgins Ave. Missoula, Mt.

Re: HB 400

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members

As a long-time off-premise beer and wine licensee (28 years) in downtown Missoula I would strongly encourage you to support HB 400. It would enable retail licensees throughout Montana to compete at a reasonably competitive level with surrounding states (as well as on a world level) in the sale of very fine specialty beers that are currently prohibited in Montana. In present day commerce, such things are easily found by interested consumers and are therefore obtained regardless of where the consumer may be located. Currently many Montana consumers are simply bypassing Montana entirely.

This negatively affects Montana revenue at all levels. Passing HB 400 would also enhance the sales of Montana-made products, as homegrown Montana breweries would then be allowed to produce and sell their own versions of these special beers both inside and outside Montana. By allowing these Montana small businesses to grow you would be providing for greater use of Montana agricultural products such as barley and wheat, not to mention enhancing job creation and retention.

Passing of HB 400 will not create greater access to alcohol for underage drinkers.

Brewers all over the world are already making these specialty beer products, and the reason for this is that current beer enthusiasts have embraced these products much as wine connoisseurs embrace special and new types of wines. All of these products are so expensive as to be appealing only to enthusiasts. The alcohol levels are higher as a matter of balancing with the enormous and varied flavors of the products. They are in no way considered beverages in the sense that beer has traditionally been viewed, and they are only made in very small quantities. At my store this type of product accounts for an ever-increasing percentage of total dollar volume. Non-passage of this bill would mean thousands of dollars a year in lost revenue to Worden's Market. My customers ask me about these products every day. Worden's supports 30 employees and we sell most every product produced by every Montana brewer. Ask brewers in your districts about Worden's and they will tell you that they want to get their products on the floor there.

Ask the Beer and Wine Wholesalers how important Worden's is to their sales. We work with them all and with your important vote in favor of HB 400 all of us will have been given a chance to keep going and keep growing. Heartfelt thanks for your attention in this matter. Best Tim France, President Worden's Market